United Nations S/2011/610

Security Council

Distr.: General
7 October 2011

Original: English

Letter dated 30 September 2011 from the Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict addressed to the President of the Security Council

In my capacity as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, I have the honour to submit a report on the activities of the Working Group since the submission of its last report, on 30 July 2010.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and the enclosed report issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Peter **Wittig**
Chairman
Security Council Working Group
on Children and Armed Conflict

11-52935 (E) 071011

Please recycle

Annual report on the activities of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005)

(1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011)

I. Introduction

1. On 26 July 2005, the Security Council adopted resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict.

2. In paragraph 8 of the resolution, the Council decided to establish a working group of the Security Council to review the reports of the mechanism referred to in paragraph 3 of the resolution, to review progress in the development and implementation of the action plans mentioned in paragraph 7 of the resolution and to consider other relevant information presented to it. The Council decided further that the working group should:

(a) Make recommendations to the Council on possible measures to promote the protection of children affected by armed conflict, including through recommendations on appropriate mandates for peacekeeping missions and recommendations with respect to the parties to the conflict;

(b) Address requests, as appropriate, to other bodies within the United Nations system for action to support implementation of the resolution in accordance with their respective mandates.

3. Pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), the Chair of the Working Group submitted reports to the Council on developments in relation to the Working Group for the periods from 26 July 2005 to 30 June 2006 (S/2006/497), from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 (S/2007/428), from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008 (S/2008/455), from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009 (S/2009/378) and from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010 (S/2010/410). Since the issuance of the latter report, the Working Group has held six formal meetings, on 8 September, 9 November and 22 December 2010 and on 25 February, 2 May and 22 June 2011. During the same period, the Working Group held approximately 17 informal consultations as well as several "informal informals" and bilateral meetings.

II. Substantive issues addressed

26th meeting

4. At its 26th meeting, on 8 September 2010, the Working Group adopted conclusions with respect to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Colombia (S/2009/434). Those conclusions were issued as a Working Group document on 30 September (S/AC.51/2010/3). The Chair of the Working Group then carried out the tasks entrusted to him in the context of the conclusions, including by drawing the attention of the Security Council to the need to follow up on the recommendations addressed to it.

5. At the same meeting, the Working Group considered the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the

Congo (S/2010/369). The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict introduced the report and recalled its main conclusions:

(a) The recruitment and use of children had continued, and patterns of sexual violence against children had been identified. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continued to commit grave violations against children, and there was a need for a regional coordinated strategy involving the United Nations and neighbouring countries. Joint military operations against the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and LRA had put children at high risk and made them more vulnerable to forced displacement, recruitment and use, sexual violence, killing and maiming.

(b) Standard operating procedures that aimed to protect children were of crucial importance, as well as the strict application of the conditionality policy that guided the support of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

(c) Progress had been made in the release of children during 2009. Despite rampant impunity, measures were slowly but steadily being put in place to hold perpetrators of grave violations against children accountable.

6. At the meeting, the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo presented the point of view of his Government. The Working Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

7. The main elements of the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the exchange of views among the members of the Working Group, were reflected in the summary contained in the conclusions subsequently adopted by the Group at its 29th formal meeting (S/AC.51/2011/1), on 25 February 2011.

8. The Working Group also held a preliminary exchange of views regarding various proposals to strengthen the use by the Working Group of the Secretary-General's global horizontal note, in particular ways to make the document more action-oriented.

27th meeting

9. At its 27th formal meeting, on 9 November 2010, the Working Group adopted conclusions with respect to the reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Nepal (S/2010/183) and the Philippines (S/2010/36). Those conclusions were issued as documents of the Working Group on 12 November (S/AC.51/2010/4 and S/AC.51/2010/5, respectively). The Permanent Representatives of Nepal and the Philippines conveyed the respective views of their Governments on the Secretary-General's report during the meeting. The Chair of the Working Group subsequently carried out the tasks entrusted to him in the context of the conclusions, namely, by dispatching letters to the Permanent Representative of Nepal and the Secretary-General, through the President of the Security Council, as well as letters addressed to the United Nations Mission in Nepal, the Resident Coordinator and donor States, and issuing a Security Council statement to the press (SC/10090).

10. At the meeting, the Chair also took the opportunity to welcome the administrative support provided to the Working Group by the Security Council Affairs Division of the Department of Political Affairs, pursuant to the relevant provisions

of resolution 1882 (2009) and the presidential statements of 17 July 2008 (S/PRST/2008/28), 29 April 2009 (S/PRST/2009/9) and 16 June 2010 (S/PRST/2010/10).

28th meeting

11. At its 28th formal meeting, on 22 December 2010, the Working Group considered the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Somalia (S/2010/577). The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict introduced the Secretary-General's report and recalled its main conclusions:

(a) The level and scale of grave violations against children in Somalia had increased in the past two years, particularly with regard to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, the killing and maiming of children, and the denial of humanitarian access to children. Displacement, livelihood collapse and the lack of statutory protection services had affected children across the country and further increased their vulnerability to all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse.

(b) Parties to the conflict responsible for recruiting and using children and committing other grave violations against children included the Transitional Federal Government, the Government-allied Alhu Sunnah Wal Jama'a, the Hizbul Islam group and Al-Shabaab group.

(c) The precarious and unpredictable security situation in Somalia presented a challenge to the provision of a definitive account of violations and perpetrators; hence the total figures provided on each violation were not representative of the scale and scope of violations committed against Somali children.

12. At the meeting, the Permanent Representative of Somalia presented the point of view of his Government. The Working Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

13. The Chair reported on the Working Group's field visit to Nepal from 22 to 26 November 2010, its first mission to the field. The mission was led by the Chair of the Working Group and included representatives from the delegations of Austria, France, Japan, Mexico, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. The purpose of the visit was to follow up the action plan of December 2009, signed by the Government of Nepal, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M) and the United Nations, to separate and reintegrate minors associated with UCPN-M, to assess remaining challenges in monitoring and reporting, and follow up on the previous conclusions of the Working Group (see S/AC.51/2010/4). During the Working Group's mission, a number of commitments were made by the Government of Nepal, UCPN-M and the youth wings of various political parties.

14. Also at the 28th meeting, the Chair circulated for further discussion a working paper summarizing various proposals to strengthen the implementation of the global horizontal note in connection with the Working Group's formal meeting on 8 September 2010. The Secretariat also delivered a short briefing on various technological platforms that could assist the Working Group, such as an RSS reader page on children and armed conflict (via Netvibes), and a United Nations e-Room (electronic room) on children and armed conflict.

29th meeting

15. At its 29th meeting, on 25 February 2011, the Working Group adopted conclusions with respect to the reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2010/369) and Somalia (S/2010/577). Those conclusions were issued on 1 March as documents S/AC.51/2011/1 and S/AC.51/2011/2, respectively. The Chair of the Working Group subsequently carried out the tasks entrusted to him in the context of the conclusions, including by drawing the attention of the Security Council to the need to follow up on the recommendations addressed to it, and, in particular, by dispatching letters to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, through the President of the Security Council, as well as letters to various Member States. The Chair also issued Security Council statements to the press pursuant to both sets of conclusions (SC/10202 on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and SC/10205 on Somalia).

16. At the 29th meeting, the Working Group also considered the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan (S/2011/55). The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict introduced the report and recalled its main conclusions:

(a) Children had been used by anti-government elements for such activities as carrying out suicide bombing and planting explosives, or recruited by the Afghan National Security Forces despite the official government policy. Of equal concern was the detention of children by the Afghan authorities and the international forces present in Afghanistan for alleged association with armed groups. An increasing number of attacks on schools and students jeopardized the right of Afghan children to safely access education.

(b) Children continued to be killed or maimed in suicide attacks or during engagements by Afghan and international forces. There was a need for greater attention to the issue of sexual violence committed against boys and girls by armed parties to the conflict.

(c) Progress had been made since the last reporting period, especially in terms of dialogue with the Government of Afghanistan on the protection of children. The commitment of the Government to sign an action plan against the recruitment and use of children in the Afghan National Security Forces was a welcome development.

17. At the meeting the representative of Afghanistan presented the point of view of his Government. The Working Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

18. At the 29th meeting the Working Group also considered the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Chad (S/2011/64). The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict introduced the report and recalled its main conclusions:

(a) Insecurity in the eastern region of Chad improved markedly in 2010 owing to progress in relations between Chad and the Sudan from mid-2009. In particular, the establishment of a Chad-Sudan joint border force in April 2010, together with the improved operational capacity of the Détachement intégré de sécurité, had a positive impact on the security situation and the protection of children.

(b) The recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups was still an ongoing phenomenon, although the large number of cases of children who returned or were released from various armed groups was encouraging. However, children continued to be targets of sexual and gender-based violence, and there remained a considerable danger of mines and other explosive remnants of war.

(c) The Government of Chad had shown political will in addressing the recruitment and use of children, in particular through the organization of a regional conference to end the recruitment and use of children, as well as the hosting of the first meeting of the monitoring committee to follow up the N'Djamena Declaration.

19. The representative of Chad presented the point of view of his Government. The Working Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

20. The main elements of the statement made by the representative of Chad, as well as the exchange of views among the members of the Working Group, were included in the summary contained in the conclusions subsequently adopted by the Group at its 30th meeting, on 2 May 2011 (S/AC.51/2011/4).

21. The Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF then presented the Secretary-General's global horizontal note for November-December 2010, placing particular emphasis on the situation of children in the Philippines and South Sudan; in Afghanistan, where the occupation of educational spaces was of growing concern; and in Côte d'Ivoire, where there was an increasing need to monitor the impact of violence on children.

22. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General also reported to the Working Group on her visit to Afghanistan and the signing on 30 January 2011 of an action plan with the Afghan National Police to end child recruitment and use, sexual violence and killing and maiming of children.

30th meeting

23. At its 30th meeting, on 2 May 2011, the Working Group adopted conclusions with respect to the reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan (S/2011/55) and Chad (S/2011/64). Those conclusions were issued on 3 May as documents S/AC.51/2011/3 and S/AC.51/2011/4, respectively. The Chair of the Working Group then carried out the tasks entrusted to him in the context of the conclusions, including by drawing the attention of the Security Council to the need to follow up on the recommendations addressed to it, namely by dispatching letters to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of Afghanistan and Chad, through the President of the Security Council, as well as letters addressed to various Member States. The Chair also issued Security Council statements to the press on both sets of conclusions (SC/10259 on Afghanistan and SC/10260 on Chad).

24. Also at its 30th meeting, the Working Group considered the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic (S/2011/241). The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict introduced the report and recalled its main conclusions:

(a) Sporadic fighting between Government forces and armed groups, prevalent banditry and the extreme poverty of the population had caused a protection crisis, compounded by the lack of capacity of the defence and security forces and the judiciary, as well as by insufficient socio-economic opportunities.

(b) The mobilization of children into the ranks of rebel groups and self-defence militias throughout the country continued, in spite of the Government's commitment to end their use and recruitment. The national armed forces, armed groups, self-defence militias and road bandits were responsible for grave violations against children.

(c) Limited progress had been made in the development and implementation of action plans by armed groups signatories to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Other grave violations included the killing of children, sexual violence, attacks on health centres and the denial of humanitarian access. In the south-east of the country, the Lord's Resistance Army continued to abduct and forcibly recruit children and use them as combatants, spies, sex slaves and porters.

25. The representative of the Central African Republic presented the point of view of his Government. The Working Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

26. The main elements of the statement made by the representative of the Central African Republic, and of the exchange of views among the members of the Working Group, are reflected in the summary contained in the conclusions subsequently adopted by the Group at its 31st meeting, on 22 June 2011 (S/AC.51/2011/5).

27. Also at the 30th meeting, the Permanent Representative of Belgium briefed the Working Group on his recent visit to the Central African Republic in his capacity as Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. He placed particular emphasis on the need to implement individual action plans with listed parties and the importance of strengthening the monitoring and reporting mechanism in the Central African Republic.

28. The Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF then presented the global horizontal note for January-February 2011, noting, inter alia, that children in Côte d'Ivoire had been exposed to grave violations. She also noted that information on grave violations in Libya had been included in the note, but cautioned that verification of information remained difficult.

29. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict then briefed the Working Group on the situation of children in Côte d'Ivoire.

31st meeting

30. At its 31st meeting, on 22 June 2011, the Working Group adopted conclusions with respect to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic (S/2011/241), which were issued on 6 July as document S/AC.51/2011/5.

31. The Working Group also considered the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Iraq (S/2011/366). The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict introduced the report and recalled its main conclusions:

(a) Despite an improvement in the security situation, grave violations committed against children continued to be reported in the context of the continuing conflict in Iraq, such as the recruitment and use of children, including use of children as suicide bombers, the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals.

(b) Access to affected populations and children for monitoring and verification purposes was not consistent. The United Nations and human rights monitoring bodies should be granted full access to detention facilities.

(c) The Government of Iraq had made efforts to address some of the child protection concerns during the reporting period.

32. The representative of Iraq presented the point of view of his Government. The Working Group then held an exchange of views and, following the discussion, the experts were given the task of negotiating draft conclusions of the Group that would provide concrete follow-up to the Secretary-General's report.

33. The main elements of the statement made by the representative of Iraq, and of the exchange of views among the members of the Working Group, will be reflected in the summary contained in the conclusions to be adopted by the Group at its next formal meeting.

34. Also at the 31st meeting, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict reported on her visit to Chad from 13 to 17 June 2011, where she had witnessed the signing, on 14 June 2011, of an action plan between the United Nations and the National Army of Chad to prevent the recruitment and use of children.

35. The Special Representative also gave an update on the situation of children in Côte d'Ivoire, noting that the monitoring and reporting mechanism should be fully re-established in Côte d'Ivoire.

36. The Director of the Office of Emergency Programmes of UNICEF then presented the Secretary-General's global horizontal note for the period March-April 2011, placing particular emphasis on challenges to the protection of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Myanmar. He also noted concern at attacks on schools and hospitals in Colombia and South Sudan, as well as the killing of teachers in Myanmar and the use of schools for military purposes in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Philippines and South Sudan. Representatives of Colombia, France and Brazil took the floor to comment on the note.

37. The Chair reported on the Working Group's visit to Afghanistan from 6 to 10 June 2011. The purpose of the visit by the Group was, inter alia, to take stock of progress made by the Government of Afghanistan and its partners in the implementation of the action plan signed with the United Nations regarding children associated with Afghan National Security Forces, to assess the impact of the conflict on the safety and accessibility of schools and hospitals for children, and to discuss possible solutions with government officials, members of civil society and religious leaders. Owing to limited funding, only the delegations of China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States participated in the field trip, through their embassies in Kabul.